

Office of the
State Department
of Education

**Public
School Information**

**2008
Legislative
Report**

Idaho Middle School Task Force

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Idaho Middle School Task Force

BACKGROUND

The Middle School Task Force was created in May 2007 as a result of the State Board of Education's High School Redesign efforts and recommendation for a committee to examine middle school issues. In response to this request, the Idaho State Department of Education in cooperation with the Idaho State Board of Education created the Idaho Middle School Task Force, comprised of key stakeholders from around the State including: superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, school board trustees, legislators, parents, a business representative, and representatives from the State Department of Education and State Board of Education. The Idaho State Department of Education has provided the funding for the task force meetings and travel.

OVERVIEW

Goals

Goal One: To ensure all students are prepared to be successful in high school.

Goal Two: To increase academic engagement and student accountability by middle school students through a relevant and rigorous curriculum.

Goal Three: To carefully examine the benefits and issues associated with increasing middle school curriculum requirements.

Goal Four: To carefully examine the benefits of strong leadership and a focus on continuous improvement.

Goal Five: To establish positive relationships and increase the amount of guidance and support for all middle school students.

Desired Outcomes:

- Provide recommendations as to appropriate core curriculum credit requirements for middle school students
- Increase the number of middle school students who are prepared for high school core curriculum requirements
- Improve student preparation for high school and post-secondary education
- Increase the opportunities available and increase the involvement of students in accelerated learning programs
- Improve the success rate for high school freshmen

The task force will accomplish the following:

1. Research educational trends including states/districts which have adopted middle school credit systems and determine expected and unexpected outcomes;
2. Review the value of setting a clear mission and vision of success.
3. Evaluate the degree of alignment between elementary, middle, and high school curriculum.
4. Review transition process from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school.
5. Determine optimum middle school curriculum to ensure students are prepared to achieve high school core requirements.
6. Research the content preparation and knowledge of how to teach middle school students.
7. Assess and evaluate the criteria or specific indicators for high school readiness.
8. Research national trends on accelerated learning and examine best practices for preparing middle school students for high school — discuss innovative methods to enhance such preparation.
9. Review the opportunities to provide extra help for middle school students.
10. Review data/strategies/programs of schools that are raising student achievement – compare with those of similar demographics.
11. Review guidance and support systems that are provided for all middle school students.

Progress:

The Middle School Task Force has met nine times since May 2007 guided by the above listed goals and desired outcomes. During the course of these meetings the committee heard presentations and explored and evaluated topics and potential solutions relating to increasing rigor, relevance and relationships at the middle level. The task force has focused on the following areas:

Area: Accountability

Challenge: Lack of accountability for students to pass classes at the middle level.

Committee consideration: *Task force members have reviewed credit systems currently used in middle schools. The primary goal would be to introduce students to the concept of a credit system before entering high school.*

Challenge: Lack of accountability in the area of student attendance.

Committee consideration: *The committee has also looked at information regarding attendance and attendance policies in the middle school.*

Area: Transitions

Challenge: Transitioning from middle school to high school is difficult for many students which can hamper the success rate of freshman.

Committee consideration: Strategies for easing this transition have been discussed. The committee also recognizes the additional positive influence that changes being addressed in all the areas may have on the transition.

Area: Curriculum

Challenge: Lack of structure of curriculum at the middle level.

Committee consideration: The committee is examining potential revisions that will still allow districts to maintain flexibility in meeting requirements.

Area: Intervention

Challenge: Students might not meet accountability requirements for passing classes.

Committee consideration: This piece of intervention would relate to any increase in student accountability would serve as a mechanism for credit recovery to meet the requirements. The committee has been reviewing all the resources currently available that could be affective in reaching this outcome.

Challenge: Remediation and proficiency are not adequately addressed at the middle level.

Committee consideration: The committee plans to focus its recommendations on the individual student's strengths and weakness and meeting those identified needs.

Area: Leadership

Challenge: Lack of courageous and collaborative leadership at the middle level.

Committee consideration: Teachers and principals need to be well prepared to meet the unique challenges and develop the skills required at the middle level.

Challenge: Lack of guidance and support for students.

Committee consideration: The task force will examine and consider statewide standards/best practices for advisory to ensure it is meaningful and affective.

Challenge: Lack of middle level educators who are prepared for the unique environment and challenges of the middle level.

Committee consideration: The committee is examining the potential for middle level certification and post-secondary courses focused on teaching at the middle level.

Challenge: Lack of school-initiated family and community partnerships.

Recommendations:

The task force is developing a list of recommendations and potential solutions to address these challenges that will be formally presented to the 2009 Legislature. Further meetings of the Middle School Task Force will be held through the summer of 2008 to further investigate and refine recommendations and solutions. The Middle School Task Force will finalize their work by fall 2008 and make recommendations to the Idaho Legislature, State Board of Education, State Department of Education and school districts by January 2009.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TASK FORCE

Middle School Math Teacher	Christine Avila	Jerome
School District Superintendent	Hazel Bauman	Coeur d'Alene
PTA	Susan Bench	Blackfoot
Executive Director Idaho Middle Level Association	Bev Bradford	Boise
State Representative	Representative Liz Chavez	Lewiston
Idaho Middle Level Association	Jennifer Cornell	Caldwell
State Senator	Senator Russ Fulcher	Boise
Junior High School Principal	Georgeanne Griffith	Rathdrum
Middle School Principal	Randy Jensen	American Falls
State Board of Education	Allison McClintick	OSBE
Middle School Parent	Jennifer McEntee	Boise
High School Principal	Scott Miller	Idaho Falls
Middle School Parent	Maria Nate	Rexburg
School Counselor	Thel Pearson	Midvale
Board Member State Board of Education	Sue Thilo	Coeur d'Alene
Division of Professional-Technical Education	Nancy Walker	PTE
School Board Trustee and Idaho School Boards Association	Annette Winchester	Idaho Falls
President Idaho Education Association	Sherri Wood	IEA
Business Representative	Bill Young	Boise
Deputy Superintendent Division of Innovation and Choice	Rob Sauer	SDE